

City Council Minutes
February 4, 2025

Orangeburg City Council held its regularly scheduled meeting on Tuesday, February 4, 2025, at 6:00 pm in Council Chambers, 933 Middleton Street with Mayor Michael C. Butler presiding.

PRESENT:

Michael C. Butler, Mayor

Annette Dees Grevious

Jerry Hannah

Dr. Kalu Kalu

L. Zimmerman Keitt, Mayor Pro Tem (arrived 6:03pm)

Sandra P. Knotts

Richard Stroman

A motion was made by Councilmember Stroman, seconded by Councilmember Grevious to approve January 7, 2025, minutes. The motion was unanimously approved. Mayor Pro Tem Keitt was not present for the vote.

A motion was made by Councilmember Kalu, seconded by Councilmember Knotts to approve January 17, 2025, special meeting minutes. The motion was unanimously approved. Mayor Pro Tem Keitt was not present for the vote.

Mayor Butler recognized Resilience as the February Orangeburg County Community of Character Trait.

Ms. Crystal Darby addressed Council concerning Choose Healthy Life SC. She stated, "Marsha Gunter and I are certified health navigators with Choose Healthy Life SC. The Centers for Medicaid and Medicare approved Choose Healthy Life to help citizens in South Carolina get insured. Choose Healthy Life SC is a faith based, non-profit organization that focuses on health for all citizens. We have flyers to distribute tonight and are requesting your assistance in getting the word out. We are available to talk with your organizations and churches. Our goal is to help alleviate some of the health disparities in Orangeburg County. Some citizens either do not have health insurance or cannot afford it. This project is through the Affordable Care Act and the insurance would be through many providers listed in the healthcare marketplace."

Councilmember Kalu asked, "Why do you think citizens are not insured? What is the hindrance?"

Ms. Darby stated, "There can be several factors such as: They may not be aware of available programs. They are private and do not want to share information. Some, for example, get approved for the Family Health Center sliding scale and are not interested in getting an insurance plan even though we have plans that start at \$0 per month."

Councilmember Grevious asked, "Do you offer affordable plans for this population of uninsured and have you partnered with any other organizations?"

Ms. Darby stated, "Yes, we do have affordable plans. We have partnered with several churches; the NAACP and we are working on other collaborations."

Councilmember Kalu asked, "Does the hospital know about your organization?"

Ms. Darby stated, "No, we plan to go to the hospital."

Councilmember Hannah asked, "Are you doing the same thing I see advertised on television? Can an individual physically walk into your organization?"

Ms. Darby stated, "Yes, they can visit us at the church."

Ms. Gail Jarvis, 807 Haywood Drive, Orangeburg addressed Council concerning DPU Concerns. She stated, "My concern as well as others that I have spoken to is there was a drastic increase in our DPU bills this past month, some from \$200 to \$900. I contacted DPU and they stated that DPU recommends the rates to City Council and City Council has the final determination of rates."

The recent bills have been extremely high. It was a hardship to receive these high bills after the holidays especially for those that are disabled and those that cannot afford it. My bill was almost \$300 more than usual, and I did not have heat for a week and half because our heat pump was out. This bill was during the holidays. We need information as to why bills were drastically increased not only for one household but for many. At that time, OCAB did not have funds but because of the significant need, they did get federal funding to assist those in need."

Mr. Johnny Abraham, 217 Madison Street, Orangeburg addressed Council concerning DPU Concerns. He stated, "I agree with Ms. Jarvis that the light bill went up this time a little higher than normal. I assumed it was because of the Christmas lights."

DPU Manager Harley stated, "Let me dispel an exaggerated myth, your light bill does not go up based on the Christmas lights. It has never been a part of the DPU bill. The City pays for that through hospitality and accommodations tax fund which are the taxes raised from people eating at restaurants and staying in hotels. I understand anything I say tonight will have little help in paying the bill you have coming forward and I want to let you know I do sympathize with you. Your recent increase is related to the recent cold weather. From December to January, temperatures were 20% colder than they were last year this time. We tell people to keep their thermostat set to 68 and any degree in the winter higher than 68 will add 7% to your bill. The average person sets their thermostat to 73, that is a 35% increase on their bill. Even if you leave it on 68 because of the temperature drops, your bill will go up because your unit will come on. You can easily see how you can double your bill. Those are the biggest variables that impact your bill. Also, window and door seals need to be checked to make sure you are not losing heat. If you request, we can send someone to your home to do a quick analysis of whether you are losing energy and whether your house may benefit from being weatherized. These are variables that go into driving energy efficiency in your home. Heat pumps are traditionally what we use in the south to heat and cool our homes. They are efficient until the temperatures get cold as they have been in the last few weeks as you will notice your unit will run a lot during this time. Council did not pass a DPU rate increase on electric and gas rates this last budget. Remember we pay in arrears, so your next bill will reflect the low temperatures we had in January."

Ms. Jarvis stated, "Another situation is my brother-in-law was in the hospitalized from November through all the cold days. He was not home at all, and his bill still was the same or more."

DPU Manager Harley stated, "I would have to look at his usage. I do not turn my unit off when I am not home. I turn it down but not off which means again with the temperatures we had, if you left it on 68, it is going to come on whether you are home or not. I am happy to talk with you about your individual bill. We have relationships with Orangeburg-Calhoun-Allendale-Bamberg Community Action Agency, Inc. (OCAB). Our customer service representatives will often seek out churches in the community that will help folks. We also have the Project Neighbor Program through Cooperative Church Ministries of Orangeburg (CCMO). For folks that do not qualify for any of those assistance, we have payment options to help mitigate the one-time big payments that you might have. We understand that the person sitting across from us is not a bill. They are a customer who is experiencing a difficult time perhaps, but we will work with you in any way possible."

Councilmember Hannah stated, "Mr. Harley please talk about hot water heaters and the comparison of DPU rates to other utility rates."

DPU Manager Harley stated, "City Council raised DPU water and wastewater rates in the last budget. With that increase, on a total bill, DPU is still one of the lowest in the state. City Council did not raise electric and gas rates in the last budget. We were either the lowest or the second lowest in the state in our region for total utility bill on electricity and gas. If you have an issue with a water heater, it could run your water bill up as it could be running more. We can generally see that in monitoring bills and notify you if there is something that is not normal with your usage."

Mr. Abraham asked, "I have a problem with wastewater. I live in a low-lying area and when it rains, the water pushes the raw sewage down to the mainline, the cover pops up and it runs down on my property. Can the pipe be widened?"

DPU Manager Harley stated, "Mr. Abraham, I can talk with you about this as City sewer is under DPU."

Mayor Butler stated, "Ms. Jarvis, please tell others to call DPU and request an assessment be completed."

DPU Manager stated, "There is no cost for the assessment and the best time to do the assessment is this time of the year because we complete a thermal shot of the house and we can see heat leaving windows, doors, etc."

City Administrator Evering addressed Council concerning a resolution to provide for certain certifications regarding an abandoned building site located at or near 1701, 1705, 1711 and 1715 Russell Street, Orangeburg, SC (TMP #0713-14-04-012, 0173-14-04-027, 0173-14-04-011, and 0173-14-04-010), according to SC Code Annotated Section 12-67-100, ET SEQ. He stated, "For your consideration, this is a resolution to provide for certain certifications regarding an abandoned building site located at or near 1701, 1705, 1711 and 1715 Russell Street. Orangeburg District Partners (OUDP), the developers for Railroad Corner, are requesting Council pass this resolution because they are applying for abandoned building tax credits. It is no adverse effect to the City. We are not losing any property taxes. This resolution is just a certification that the building properties were abandoned and in doing so, it will help them in their application for abandoned building tax credits."

Mayor Butler asked, "Are these the buildings that were across from Dollar General?"

City Administrator Evening stated, "Yes."

Mayor Butler stated, "We knew this was coming when we started the project and that is why they stayed abandoned for so long."

A motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Keitt, seconded by Councilmember Kalu to approve a resolution to provide for certain certifications regarding an abandoned building site located at or near 1701, 1705, 1711 and 1715 Russell Street, Orangeburg, SC (TMP #0713-14-04-012, 0173-14-04-027, 0173-14-04-011, and 0173-14-04-010), according to SC Code Annotated Section 12-67-100, ET SEQ. The motion was unanimously approved.

A motion was made by Councilmember Stroman, seconded by Councilmember Grevious to go into Executive Session concerning discussion of negotiations incident to proposed contractual arrangements and/or the receipt of legal advice S.C. Code Sec. 30-4-70(a)(2) - Hillcrest Lease Agreement and Performance Evaluation Discussion – Department of Public Utilities Manager S.C. Code Sec. 30-4-70(a)(1). The motion was unanimously approved.

Council did not return from Executive Session. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda McDaniel

Linda McDaniel
City Clerk





RESOLUTION

TO PROVIDE FOR CERTAIN CERTIFICATIONS REGARDING AN ABANDONED BUILDING SITE LOCATED AT OR NEAR 1701 RUSSELL STREET (TAX MAP NO. 0713-14-04-012), 1705 RUSSELL STREET (TAX MAP NO. 0173-14-04-027), 1711 RUSSELL STREET (TAX MAP NO. 0173-14-04-011), AND 1715 RUSSELL STREET (TAX MAP NO. 0173-14-04-010), ORANGEBURG, SOUTH CAROLINA, ACCORDING TO SOUTH CAROLINA CODE ANNOTATED SECTION 12-67-100, *ET SEQ.*

WHEREAS, the South Carolina Abandoned Buildings Revitalization Act ("Act") was enacted as South Carolina Code Annotated section 12-67-100, *et seq.*, to create an incentive for the rehabilitation, renovation, and redevelopment of abandoned buildings;

WHEREAS, the Act provides that transformation of abandoned buildings to productive assets for the communities in which the abandoned buildings are located serves a public and corporate purpose and results in job opportunities and tax base;

WHEREAS, section 12-67-140 of the Act provides that a taxpayer who rehabilitates an abandoned building is eligible either for a credit against income taxes, license fees, or premium taxes, or a credit against local property taxes, all as more further described in the Act;

WHEREAS, Orangeburg University District Partners, LLC ("Taxpayer"), is the developer who is responsible for all of the rehabilitation expenses associated with the redevelopment of real property, a portion of which, according to the information provided by the Taxpayer to the City, is located in the City's corporate limits, at or near 1701 Russel Street (Tax Map No. 0713-14-04-012), 1705 Russell Street (Tax Map No. 0173-14-04-027), 1711 Russell Street (Tax Map No. 0173-14-04-011), and 1715 Russell Street (Tax Map No. 0173-14-04-010), Orangeburg, South Carolina (collectively, "Property");

WHEREAS, the Taxpayer has represented to the City that it is in the Taxpayer's best interest to pursue only the credit against income taxes pursuant to Section 12-67-140 of the Act; and

WHEREAS, the Taxpayer has supplied to the City (1) a signed affidavit stating the abandonment of the building and (2) a GIS map of the Property, copies of which are attached to this Resolution as Exhibit A and Exhibit B, respectively; represented to the City that the information is truthful and accurate; and has requested that the City certify the Property is an "abandoned building site," and, on the "site," contains an "abandoned" "building," all as more fully described in the Act;

NOW, THEREFORE, BASED SOLELY ON THE INFORMATION PROVIDED TO THE CITY BY THE TAXPAYER, WITHOUT INVESTIGATION, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF ORANGEBURG, SOUTH CAROLINA, AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1. The City finds that:

- (a) Each separately addressed portion of the Property is a separate abandoned building as defined section 12-67-120(1) of the Act; and
- (b) The geographic area of each separately addressed portion of the Property is consistent with section 12-67-120(2) of the Act.

Section 2. This Resolution provides no property tax relief whatsoever. This Resolution provides no information regarding the availability of any benefit to the Taxpayer.

Section 3. This Resolution is effective as of the date of its adoption.

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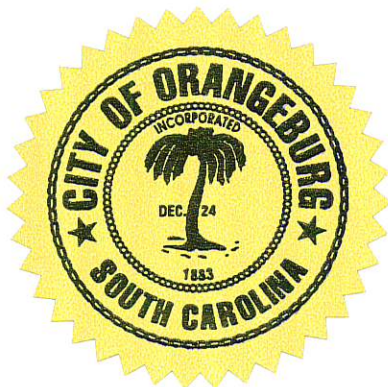
ADOPTED BY the City Council on February 4, 2025.

Mayor

Michael C. Butler

Members of Council

[Signature]
[Signature]
Jandra P. Knott
Richard F. Stroman
[Signature]
[Signature]



Attest: Liida McDaniel
City Clerk

Exhibit A

State of South Carolina)
County of Orangeburg)

AFFIDAVIT

PERSONALLY APPEARED BEFORE ME, David Epting (the "Affiant") who being first
duly sworn, deposes and says that:

1. I am the Building Official for the City of Orangeburg.
2. Orangeburg University District Partners, LLC, will be purchasing the properties located at 1701 Russell Street, TMS #: 0713-14-04-012, 1705 Russell Street, TMS #: 0173-14-04-027, 1711 Russell Street, TMS #: 0173-14-04-011, and 1715 Russell Street, TMS #: 0173-14-04-010, Orangeburg, 29115, Orangeburg County, South Carolina.
3. I have personal knowledge of the occupancy history of the Buildings from 2012 to the present time.
4. For a period of at least five (5) years to the present time, the Buildings have been at least Sixty Six (66%) Percent vacant and non-operational for income producing purposes.
5. The affiant verifies that the property did not have a preceding use as a single family residence.

Further Your Affiant Sayeth Naught

David Epting
Affiant Name

Sworn to before me this)
)
30th day of January, 2025)
)
Lantana Rayner Walker)
(L.S.))
Notary Public for South Carolina
My commission expires 02.19.2031

Exhibit B

